

E. The Ave/15th Avenue NE Corridor

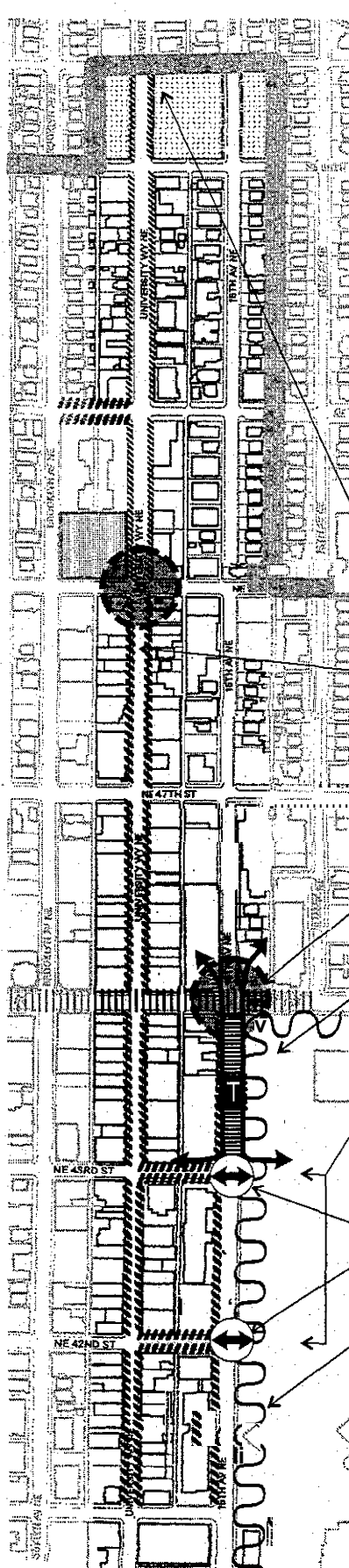
Encompassing the properties on both sides of University Way NE (The Ave) and 15th Avenue NE, The Ave/15th Avenue NE corridor includes the community's most lively pedestrian-oriented retail strip, two important north-south transit routes, and the western edge of the UW campus. Situated between the campus and two residential neighborhoods as well as the mixed-use core, The Ave/15th Avenue NE corridor is a kind of keystone, important in tying other activities together. Over the past decades, The Ave has experienced decreasing retail sales and a lack of property and business investment. However, during the past few years, local merchants have formed a Business Improvement Association for increased cleaning and security south of NE 52nd Street, and the University Saturday Market attracts visitors from throughout the region. These and other efforts have had a positive impact. New, high-quality businesses have opened, and retail sales have risen. Looking to the future, new RTA stations planned under 15th Avenue NE at roughly NE 45th Street and NE Pacific Street will increase the area's role as a transportation hub and promise to bring significant changes and opportunities to the community.

The community sees this area as a vibrant retail shopping district, with both regional attractions and local services. With the Burke Museum, the Henry Gallery, Meany Theater, and other attractions, it is also the focus of cultural activities. Finally, its role as a regionally important transportation hub should be explored, but not allowed to overrun its role as a community and retail focus.









The community's vision for this area includes

- Improved sidewalks and street infrastructure design guidelines on The Ave from NE 50th Street to Campus Parkway to make it a more effective and attractive pedestrian/transit corridor
- An efficient intermodal bus/light rail transfer station
- Upgraded streetscape and campus edge along 15th Avenue NE
- Improved east-west pedestrian connections at NE 43rd, 42nd, and 41st Streets.
- Attractive development (but not higher than 65 feet) to take advantage of the new light rail access
- Mid-block east-west pedestrian pathways.

Because of its central location and high visibility, participants felt that high urban design quality is particularly important in this area. And because of the area's critical role in the city's transportation network and RTA planning, actions to achieve this vision involve high levels of public investment and transportation system coordination.



Legend

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|---|---|
|  Parks Proposed for Acquisition or Improvements |  Improved Pedestrian Connection |
|  Minor Streetscape Improvements. Parking Strips and Street Trees |  Urban Center Boundary |
|  Streetscape improvements (trees, lights, pavement and/or other amenities) |  Proposed Gateway Feature |
|  Area Rezoning |  Bus and Pedestrian Improvements |

Downzone the area north of NE 55th Street to NC-2 (40') to transition to residential neighborhoods.

Implement planned streetscape improvements on The Ave (from Campus Parkway to NE 50th) to widen sidewalks, improve bus stops, enhance urban design character, and upgrade utilities.

Develop design guidelines on The Ave to reinforce pedestrian orientation and enhance architectural variety.

Encourage development of office and residential uses above shops,

Create a community gateway with improved crosswalks, landscaping, and a sign or landmark element at NE 45th Street and 15th Avenue NE.

Plan for an RTA light rail station serving the UW North Campus, The Ave, U-District commercial areas, and residential areas. Work with RTA on station area planning and the design of station access points,

Create a plaza or wider sidewalks on NE 42nd or 43rd Streets (between The Ave and 15th Avenue NE) to improve pedestrian connections between The Ave and the UW campus and to provide an RTA station access point. Options include (1) closing NE 42nd or 43rd to traffic, (2) removing parking on NE 42nd or 43rd, or (3) making NE 42nd and NE 43rd Streets one-way.

Improve connections to the UW campus with crosswalks, special entry features, and on-campus improvements.

Upgrade the 15th Avenue NE streetscape with landscaping, a softer campus wall, and transit amenities.

Work with Metro and RTA to configure bus service and rail connections in the UCUC, particularly on NE 45th Street, 15th Avenue NE, and The Ave.

THE NORTH | SOUTH CORRIDOR The Ave and 15th Avenue NE

Figure III- 79: The Ave/15th Avenue NE Corridor

The necessary first step in The Ave/15th Avenue NE corridor's revitalization is the pedestrian and transportation improvements to The Ave itself. Realizing that the narrow, dilapidated sidewalks and substandard street system strnd in the way of other revitalization efforts, the Greater University Chamber of Commerce and The Ave Planning Group have, over the past several years, spearheaded an initiative to upgrade the street itself. These efforts have already led to *The Ave Plan*, a preliminary plan for improving sidewalks, bus stops, and infrastructure systems on The Ave. Councilmembers and representatives from local organizations have been enthusiastic in their support for the plan. The community, SeaTran, and Metro will be completing a test in early 1998 to determine if in-lane bus stops are effective in facilitating bus operations.

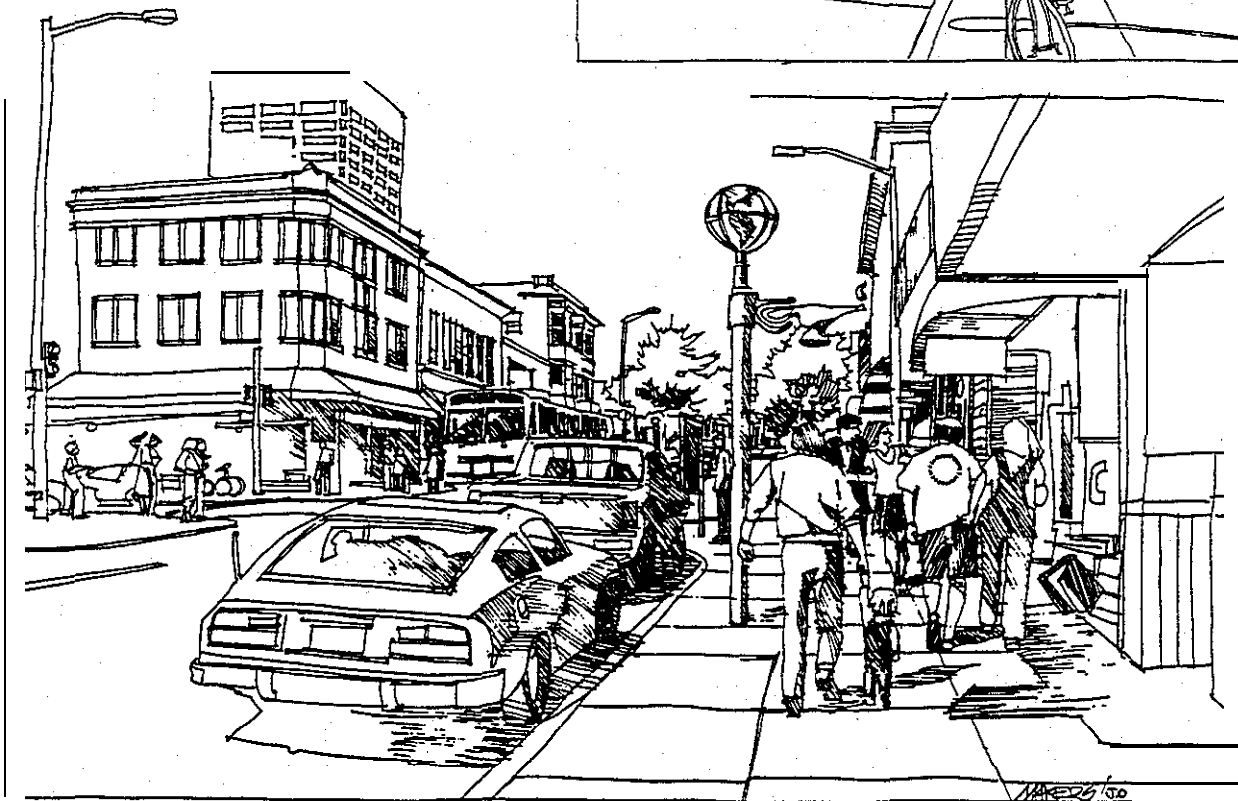
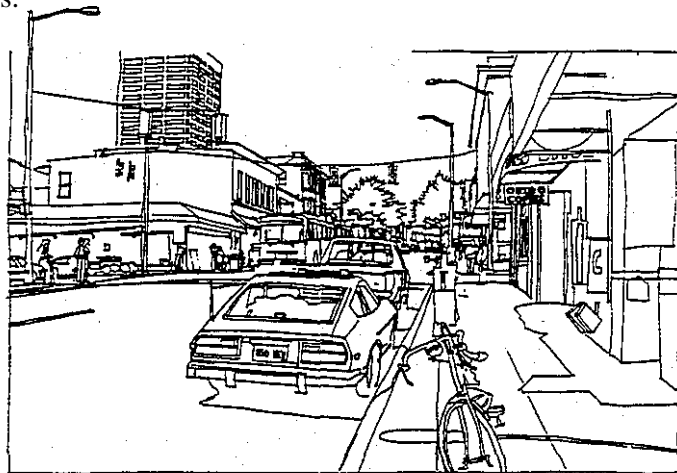


Figure III-20: Illustration of Proposed Street Improvements to The Ave

Once a preferred bus stop configuration is determined in autumn 1998, SeaTran and the community will design the street improvements (see *Activity B-5*). The City is currently seeking \$5.5 million in construction funds. *The Ave Plan* also recommends neighborhood-specific design guidelines for new development on The Ave (*Activity A-1 I*). The guidelines will be used to facilitate the current City design review process and can be used by property owners to gain “design departures” or exemptions to certain code requirements. While the high property values on The Ave may discourage redevelopment, there are some properties where new development is likely, and it will be important that they contribute to the district’s lively design character.

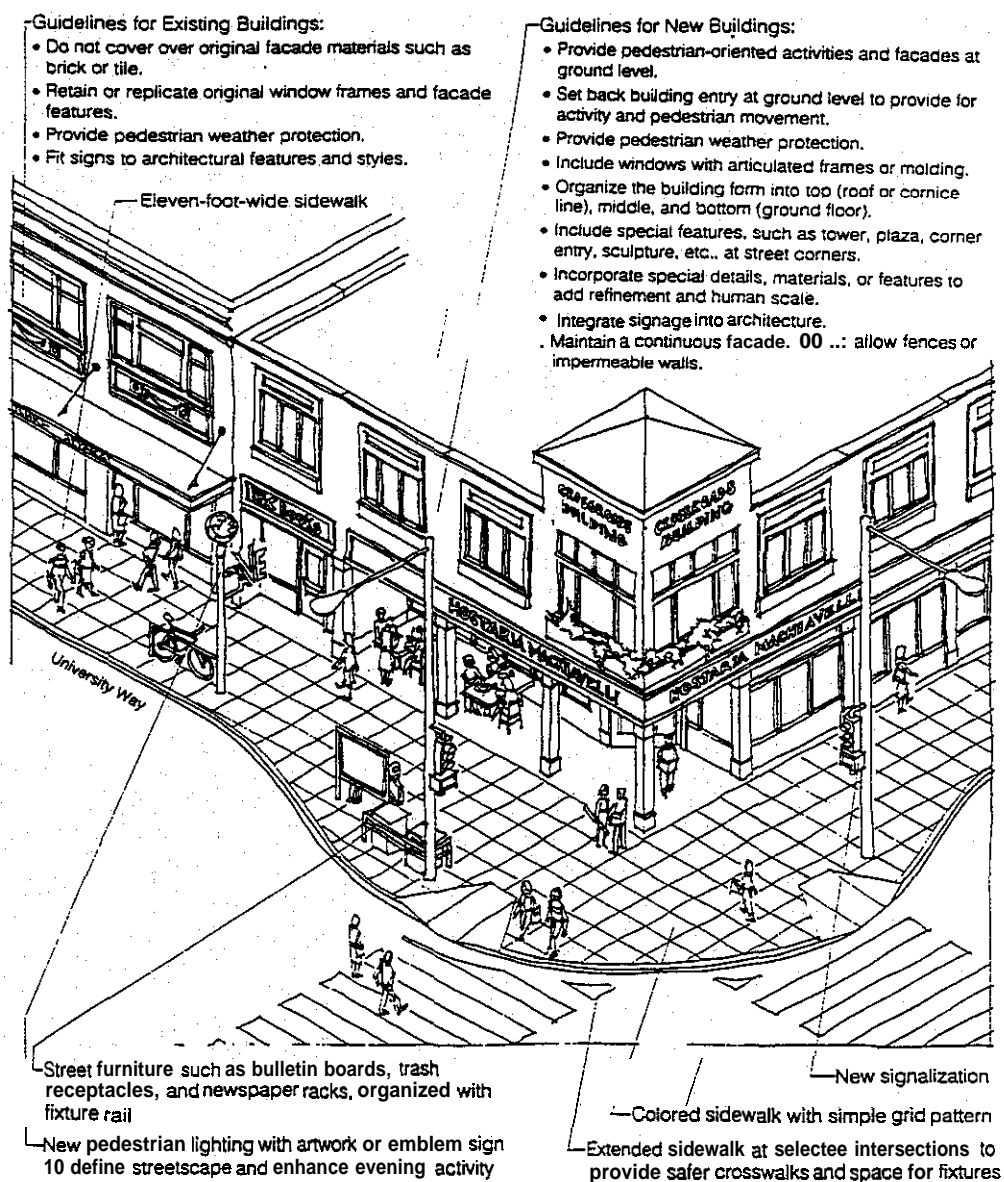


Figure III-21: Illustration of Design Guidelines Concepts Proposed for The Ave

As noted in Section II-C, Implementation, RTA will begin the planning of the LRT stations in early 1998, and the community, University, City; and Metro should be ready to incorporate station design into improvement and redevelopment of a "station area" around the LRT (*Activities B-1 and B-16 through B-18*). Current thinking is that the station design should provide:

- A strong link between the campus and The Ave
- Effective intermodal transfers (especially from the cross-town routes along NE 45th Street)
- Convenient bus stops
- Better streetscapes along 15th Avenue NE

Bus stops and transfers will be especially problematic given the much higher volumes and difficult routing movements. Some additional space for busses maybe needed, which could either require acquisition of street right-of-way or result in lower traffic capacity.

There will also be increased bus traffic on 15th Avenue NE, and new street improvements should include amenities for bus riders. During the planning process, a University of Washington architecture design studio explored design solutions to improve the western campus edge and better integrate the campus to the community. The class identified several options to upgrade 15th Avenue NE, including better street lines, lighting, and medians, softening of the campus wall, improved sidewalks at NE 43rd and 42nd Streets, and construction of a small entry plaza on the campus at 15th Avenue NE and NE 43rd Street (*Activities B-1, B-6, B-7, B-9, D-5, and D-8*). These ideas should be studied further in the campus master plan (*Activity A-15*) and during the station area design (*Activity B-1*).

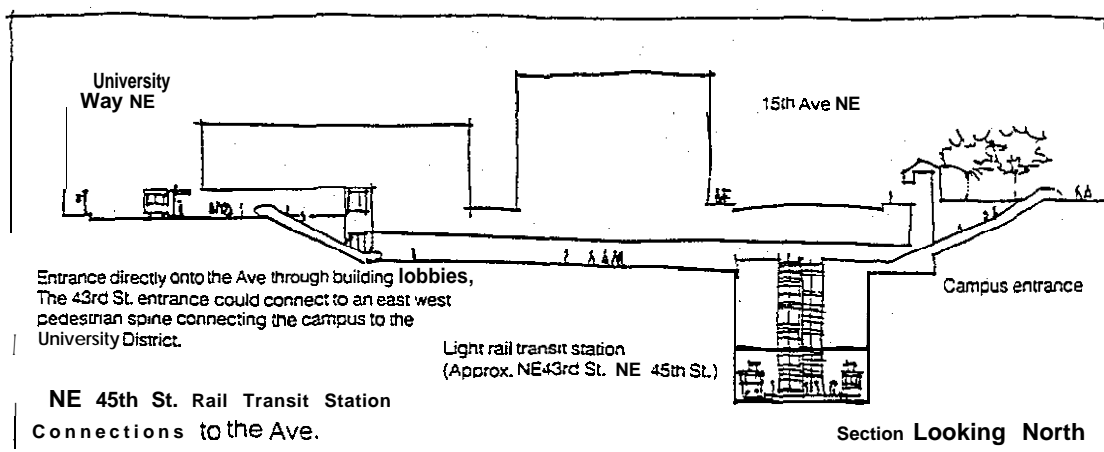


Figure 1/-22: Cross Section Through 15th Avenue NE
///strafing Light Rail Station Alignment

NE 43rd and 42nd Streets between 15th Avenue NE and The Ave are particularly important pedestrian connections, and their redesign should include increased **pedestrian** space, either by closing one of the streets or by removing a travel lane or parking lane. Ideally, the improvements should integrate the campus character with The Ave's **streetscape** qualities. Perhaps the commercial district's more **urban** quality could extend into the **campus** on the NE 43rd Street axis and the campus's more verdant character be reflected on NE 42nd Street west of 15th Avenue NE.

While the LRT station might induce more intensive development on some sites, such as the University Book Store parking lot, planning participants felt that building heights should be limited to 65 feet, especially on The Ave, because tall **buildings** on the narrow streets would create a dark, canyon-like effect.

Development proposals should receive special scrutiny during design review to ensure all opportunities are taken to give this area a cohesive and rich **urban** design **setting**.